

What is claimed is:

1. A method for franking and processing deliveries, characterized by the following method steps:

- 5    - a dispatch customer transmits information concerning anticipated deliveries including the respective recipient details to the dispatch service and triggers a process for the payment of the postal charges,
- 10    - after acceptance of the charge payment process, the dispatch service generates a franking number for each reported delivery and stores it with the provided recipient details in a searchable franking database,
- 15    the number of digits of the franking number being selected such that each delivery which occurs per recipient is provided with a separate franking number for a specific period of time,
- 20    - the dispatch service transfers the franking number to the dispatch customer for each reported delivery,
- 25    - the dispatch customer applies the franking number to the associated delivery in such a way that it can be recognized as such, is uncoded and can be read by a person,
- 30    - the labels of the deliveries which are submitted to the dispatch service by the dispatch customer are read; after the recipient address has been determined and read and a franking number has been applied, the franking database is searched to determine whether a corresponding entry is present,
- 35    - after a corresponding valid entry is determined in the franking database, the delivery is further processed and the entry in the franking database is marked as invalid immediately, or at the latest after its registration in the last distribution station;

and if no corresponding entry is found in the franking database, the delivery is rejected.

2. The method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in  
5 that, after a corresponding valid entry is determined in the franking database by the dispatch service a machine-readable code - permitting automatic distribution - is applied to the delivery.
- 10 3. The method as claimed in claim 2, characterized in that a barcode which characterizes the valid recipient address is applied as a machine-readable code.
4. The method as claimed in claim 3, characterized in  
15 that, in order to determine the valid recipient address, the dispatch service checks whether there is a forwarding facility for the recipient and if there is, the forwarding address is coded as a valid address.
- 20 5. The method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the dispatch service informs the dispatch customer of reformatting, necessary for reliable OCR reading, of the recipient address which is to be applied to the delivery.
- 25 6. The method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the dispatch service informs the dispatch customer of a recipient address which has changed owing to a forwarding facility of the recipient and is to be  
30 applied to the delivery.
7. The method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the franking number on the delivery is characterized by one or more additional characters  
35 which may easily be identified.
8. The method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the franking number is characterized by a defined position on the delivery.

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9. The method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that an additional character for characterizing this franking with the franking number is applied to the location of the delivery which is provided for stamps.
- 5 10. The method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the level of the charges paid is entered for each delivery in the franking database.
- 10 11. The method as claimed in claim 10, characterized in that the dispatch service determines the properties of the deliveries which influence charges and checks whether the charges paid correspond to the charges to be paid, and when the charges paid are too low top-up
- 15 payments are demanded from the dispatch customers or the recipients.
- 20 12. The method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the coded, valid recipient address and the franking number are used together for identifying the respective delivery within the framework of tracking transportation and monitoring distribution.